

Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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Important Notice

Every reader of the EVANGELIST is referred to the last page of this issue. Please read and act at once. This is a very rare opportunity, and we encourage you to take advantage of it. Let us add 500 names to the list. We can supply back numbers for the month of June FREE to at least fifty new subscriptions at 75 cents to the end of the year. Also read column 1, page 14.

Too Good For His Own Good

Here is a paradox in familiar dress, yet we have never known any one to stop and discuss it. We do not have to spend many words explaining it. Every mature person understands the principles upon which the world is run, and how it may be possible for one to be too good for his own good. The malady generally takes the form of excessive charity. For example, take this scripture, "Sell all thou hast, and give to the poor." We started to hand this to a very strict literalist, once, but he took to his heels as soon as he saw it coming. He smelt danger afar off. For a brief period he was anything but a literalist. He had a theory of interpretation which quite explained away this troublesome command. The Lord would never have recognized it after the brother's skillful manipulation. Well, the world would say of a hypothetical man like the one who sold all he had and gave to the poor, (for such men are wholly hypothetical now), that he was too good for his own good. The illustration enables us to see what the paradox means. It may apply in other directions. This is an age of fierce competitions, and the theory of getting rich is to crowd your neighbor to the wall. To illustrate, and we take a case which came under our personal observation, a man of large capital, member and officer in the church, added to his already swollen business several new lines, to the damage, distress and eventual ruin of several smaller tradesmen, and thereby took their living to add to his surplus. Now this fellow was one of the men who isn't too good for his own good. Had he been, he would have considered his smaller neighbor. Too good for his own good will not press legitimate competition to the point of distressing those whom otherwise he might in a perfectly legal way injure to his own profit. A celebrated precept comes to his memory, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." An

other: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." Both these scriptures call for the literal interpretation, but more often get the theoretical, or get none, and that from some loud literalists.

According to the opinion of the world a man may be too good for his own good when he denies himself the ordinary comforts of life in order that he may help those who are less fortunate than himself. That money would have bought him this and that. But for the distributing tendency which he has so abnormally developed, he could wear better clothes, live in a larger house, have more horses, finer carriages, and so on *ad extendum*. He is very foolish, indeed, but then there are not many such, hardly enough in fact to warrant an argument calculated to teach a more practical wisdom. The danger that many people are going astray along this "too good for his own good" line is not serious or imminent, and we safely trust to the common sense of the times.

But suppose we should look a little further ahead than the majority of seers, and ask whether or not these foolishly good people do themselves an injury by the practical lovingkindness of their lives. We all know what money does when it is well invested. Now if a man should really go so far as to lay up treasures in heaven, might it not after all be a good thing for him? Might not the investment pay? It is said of John Wesley that from a comparatively small income he gave away, during the course of his long life, an immense fortune. We wonder what that investment is worth to-day? Suppose he had lost it in speculation, as we have known some people to do, or spent it on himself, as we have known some people to do, or left it to spendthrift heirs, as we have known some people to do, he wouldn't have been called too good for his own good, would he? Much depends upon the point of view, and it may turn out after all that as a point of view, eternity may have exceptional advantages. The Lord was not regarded in his time as a good financier, and on one occasion he made a tremendous commotion, as we would say, "on change," upsetting tables and scattering the money quite recklessly, but the deepest thought of the philosophical world is coming to the conclusion that the investments he recommends are the safest and best. "Lay up treasures in heaven."